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William Law, Behmenism, and Counter Enlightenment

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The importance of William Law has never been in doubt. Scholars have regarded him as an extremely effective High Church apologist by virtue of his replies to Bishop Benjamin Hoadly on ecclesiology and eucharistic theology, and as an influential pastoral guide by virtue of the success of his *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. He is also considered the most notable post-Reformation English mystic by virtue of his later works, written under the influence of the early seventeenth-century Silesian theosophist, Jacob Böhme. This Behmenism, however, has served to reduce the admiration expressed for him. Even sympathetic contemporaries regarded Law's enthusiasm for Böhme as certainly eccentric, and perhaps even more objectionable than that. Retrospection did not blunt eighteenth-century disapproval. Dean (later Bishop) George Horne, who was an ardent admirer and indeed disciple of the pre-Behmenist Law, lamented the descent of "one of the brightest stars in the firmament of the church . . . into the sink and complication of Paganism, Quakerism, and Socinianism, mixed up with chemistry and astrology by a *possessed cobbler*."¹ The writers of the Romantic era were far more disposed to acknowledge the value of that from which the eighteenth-century had recoiled as "enthusiasm."

¹George Horne, *The Works of the Right Reverend George Horne* (6 vols.; London: Johnson, 1809) 1. 213 (emphasis in the original). For the character of Horne's thought in general, see Nigel Aston, "The Dean of Canterbury and the Sage of Ferney: George Horne Looks at Voltaire," in W. M. Jacob and Nigel Yates, eds., *Crown and Mitre: Religion and Society in Northern Europe since the Reformation* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1993) 139–60.

In both Germany and England, the Romantics found a good deal to be said for the cobbler of Görlitz.² If commentators no longer express disapproval of Law's turning to Behmenism, they are still somewhat inclined to view it as a merely personal development, or even as eccentricity. Interpreters typically account for Law's development as the outcome of a personal intellectual search,³ or with reference to biographical information or even psychological conjecture.⁴ It seems likely that such explanations have appeared appropriate when approaching what has been designated as mysticism, in the study of which attention has conventionally focused on the mystic's personal experience. Andrew Weeks has recently demonstrated, however, how much more is to be derived, especially for the study of mysticism as mysticism, from leaving the question of the experience of the mystical writers aside and examining their works in the context of religious, intellectual, and literary history.⁵ In this way, as the greatest historian of Jewish mysticism, Gershom Scholem, desired it to be, mysticism is seen as issuing from the believing community.⁶

The restoration of Law, including Law the mystic, to his own Nonjuring community presents only superficial difficulty. If Law's mind at times took singular turns, it nevertheless always pursued the same fundamental concerns that preoccupied other members of his communion and continued to show marked similarities in approach when dealing with them. These concerns were those of the age and shared alike by the Nonjurors, Roman Catholics, and a considerable party in the regnant church. They were those engendered by the individualistic rationalism of the English Enlightenment. In combination with a firm adherence to Protestantism's *sola scriptura* principle, this had the most alarmingly destructive effects on the fabric of Christian doctrine. Law was indeed singular—and unfortunate—among the notable thinkers of the period in finding his solution to the problem, and thus the means of carrying on his counter-Enlightenment polemic, in Behmenism. Had he followed more frequently trodden paths, he undoubtedly would have exercised

²For Germany, see David Walsh, *The Mysticism of Innerworldly Fulfillment: A Study of Jacob Boehme* (University of Florida Humanities Monographs 53; Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1983) 26–35. For England, see Arthur W. Hopkinson, *About William Law: A Running Commentary on His Works* (London: SPCK, 1948) 71–72, and Arthur Keith Walker, *William Law: His Life and Thought* (London: SPCK, 1973) 107.

³See, for example, Austin Warren, "Introduction," in Paul G. Stanwood, ed., *William Law: A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life [and] The Spirit of Love* (New York: Paulist, 1978) 11–32, esp. 24.

⁴See, for example, Hopkinson, *About William Law*, 14 and 68; or William Jardine Grisbrooke, "The Nonjurors and William Law," in Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright and Edward Yarnold, eds., *The Study of Spirituality* (London: SPCK 1986) 452–54.

⁵Andrew Weeks, *German Mysticism from Hildegard of Bingen to Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Literary and Intellectual History* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993).

⁶Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1941).

more influence. Still, one need not share the depth of Bishop Horne's regret, any more than his contempt for Böhme, for Behmenism contained elements that offered more profound challenges to Enlightenment thought than Law would have developed, had he continued in more predictable ways. It also contained profound understandings of the Christian spiritual experience. It was by means of Behmenism, therefore, that Law became the articulator of noteworthy criticism of characteristically modern thought, rather than a mere High Church polemicist, and that he became a witness to the depth of the Christian spiritual tradition, rather than merely a shrewd pastoral writer.

■ Law's Intellectual Ties and Concerns

The perception of Law as a figure isolated by his Behmenist eccentricity is concisely expressed by Henry Broxap, who judged that "William Law, regarded as a Nonjuror, stands apart . . . and the mysticism which colored the whole of his later life was foreign to the genius of the movement." For it was a mysticism that derived from enthusiasm and issued in a churchmanship standing, above all confessional divisions.⁷ This view was echoed at length and in a rather sectarian form by Stephen Hobhouse, who held that, as the years at King's Cliffe passed, Law moved toward a religion close to Quakerism, with a strong tendency to regard all external forms as largely matters of indifference. Now, one cannot deny that in his letter on church membership of 1756, which Hobhouse takes as the "fullest statement of William Law's final position,"⁸ there are statements that his fellow Nonjurors must have found profoundly shocking and that indicate inclinations toward views identified with Quakers. In particular, he declares a preference for "praying, speaking . . . [and] prophesying as from the power and presence of Christ," rather than any "humanly-contrived form of worship." One should, however, pay attention to the letter as a whole. It nowhere seeks to diminish the importance of external forms of religion; but, on the contrary, it seeks to ground them in spiritual truth and to provide justification for adhering to them, even when they are corrupted. As for the observations on the corruption of public worship, it is worth noting that these occur in the context of an exhortation to a passive obedience to ecclesiastical as well as civil government—certainly a remarkable deviation in a Nonjuror. If indeed, Law argues, the church in its exterior aspects has been corrupted by association with the state, it is nevertheless the duty of the Christian to bear this as a working out of God's salvific will.⁹ In this

⁷Henry Broxap, *The Later Non-Jurors* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924) 216–17.

⁸Stephen Hobhouse, *William Law and Eighteenth Century Quakerism: Including Letters and Fragments of William Law and John Byrom* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1927) 298.

⁹William Law to J. L., 28 Feb. 1756, T[homas] L[angcake] and G[eorge] W[ard], eds., *A Collection of Letters on the Most Interesting and Important Subjects, and on Several Occasions. By William Law* (London: Richardson, 1760) 1–24, esp. 14–21.

minor point lies an illustration of the general observation, made above, that although Law's opinions are remarkable in a Nonjuror, they nevertheless clearly derive from Nonjuror concerns and patterns of thought. Though the observation applies to all of Law's thought, it will, for the present, be sufficient to illustrate it further with reference to the two characteristics of the later Law to which Broxap pointed as deriving from his turning to mysticism and placing him beyond the pale of Nonjuror thought—his disregard of confessional distinctions and his belief in the possibility of the divine inspiration of the individual Christian. These stances are better explained by looking to the difficulties encountered by many Nonjurors, than to what was particular to Law.

Both Broxap and Hobhouse quote the well-known passage from the letter mentioned above, in which Law declares that he is "neither Protestant nor Papist, according to the common acceptation of the words" and that he cannot consider himself "as belonging only to one society of Christians, in separation and distinction from all others."¹⁰ This, however, did not indicate that Law regarded denominational affiliation as a matter of indifference. In the last years of his life he remained willing to offer strong criticism of both Methodism and Moravianism.¹¹ In fact, on examination, Law's praise for other denominations appears very restricted. In *Some Animadversions upon Dr. Trap's Late Reply*, from which Hobhouse also extensively quotes as illustrative of his view of Law's development,¹² only two denominations appear to possess commendable characteristics—Quakerism and Catholicism—and the text also includes clear denunciations of their objectionable features. With Quaker writings, Law professed himself but very little acquainted,¹³ and accordingly of Quakerism he says little. With Catholic writers, especially certain Jesuits, however, he was clearly very familiar and listed those he most admired.¹⁴ This illustrates the real divergences between Law and other Nonjurors on the matter of denominational division. First, he had a singular but very limited sympathy for Quakerism. Second, his lack of enthusiasm for the Protestant tradition derived not, as it did for other Nonjurors, from the reading of patristic literature and from reflection on seventeenth-century divinity. It stemmed, rather, from a profound affection for not only certain medieval mystics but also post-Reformation Catholic writers. Even if, however, his intellectual path was some-

¹⁰Quoted in Hobhouse, *Law and Quakerism*, 305. See also Broxap, *Later Non-Jurors*, 216–17.

¹¹John Henry Overton, *William Law, Nonjuror and Mystic . . . : A Sketch of His Life, Character and Opinions* (London: Longmans, Green, 1881) 421–22.

¹²Hobhouse, *Law and Quakerism*, 274–81. This work was originally published in 1740. Here it is cited as published in Law's *An Appeal to All That Doubt, or Disbelieve the Truths of the Gospel, Whether They Be Deists, Arians, Socinians, or Nominal Christians* (London: Innys, 1742) 215–332.

¹³*Ibid.*, 272–73, 280–86.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 282–83.

what different, he arrived at the same place as his fellow Nonjurors. His assertion that he was neither Protestant nor Papist seems not to be an indication of indifference to any denominational affiliation. Rather, the difficulty for him lay in clearly relating his own position to the two mentioned, occasioned by the tension between his Protestant background and his inclination to Catholicism.

This difficulty he shared with other Nonjurors and especially with the Usagers, who separated themselves from the main Nonjuring body after 1716, ostensibly over certain liturgical practices. The Usagers' true concern was with defense of the doctrine of the eucharistic sacrifice and of the necessity of an ecclesial tradition—discoverable by antiquarian researches into the beliefs and practices of the early church—which supplemented scripture. Their acceptance of the views of the Reformers was thus not, to state the matter mildly, uncritical. Thomas Brett, the most intellectually able of the Usagers, after offering his criticism of the religion of the Reformation, was able to offer no clearer statement of his own ecclesiastical position than the declaration that he was “of the Communion of the Primitive Church.”¹⁵ Thomas Deacon, the leader of those few Usagers who continued in their separation from the larger body even after a reunion in 1732, defined his position in the same way and with evenhanded criticism, on the basis of his understanding of early Christianity, of the Church of England, and of the Roman church. He did this implicitly in the catechism and prayer book he prepared for his Orthodox British Church,¹⁶ but also on occasion explicitly.¹⁷ Law essentially shared the position of Brett and Deacon, although for him the early church's authority derived from its being the undivided, rather than merely the primitive church,¹⁸ and his vision of what a restoration of this church would look like was rather different from theirs. Moreover, his theory of passive obedience and his inclination to look positively on the inadequate religion of others prevented him from following Deacon and the logic of their common position into the sectarian wilderness, and in fact, kept him worshipping in the parish church at King's Cliffe.

Law's sympathy for Quakers—his belief that the Quaker pilgrim, as he put it, was possessed of one good leg on which to hobble toward salvation—no doubt

¹⁵Thomas Brett, *Tradition Necessary to Explain and Interpret the Scriptures*. . . (London: Bennetham, 1718) 44–53, esp. 51.

¹⁶This was the name given to the continuing Usager body after the reunion of the greater part of it with the main (Nonusager) Nonjuring communion in 1732. See Henry Broxap, *A Biography of Thomas Deacon: The Manchester Non-Juror* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1911) 89–101.

¹⁷See, for example, Deacon to Pierce, 4 May 1750. Chetham's Library, Manchester (Mun. A6. 71). Transcription of a letter in the Scottish Episcopal Church Library, Edinburgh.

¹⁸See, for example, Law's declaration of faith (*Appeal to All That Doubt*, 279), in which he declared a desire to be found acceptable to God, as if he “had been a faithful member of the *one whole* Church before it was broken into separate Parts.”

found confirmation in his adventitious agreement with them in, for example, their pacifist stance. Centrally, however, it was his belief in “the Sufficiency of the Divine Light, and Necessity of seeking only the Guidance and Inspiration of the Holy Spirit,” that disposed him to regard the Society of Friends with some approval, even though he regretted that they had “made this Doctrine their Corner Stone.”¹⁹ That this view should be taken by one who so frequently referred to the “inspired” and “illuminated” Jacob Böhme is hardly surprising and justifies the assertion that Law was indeed an enthusiast. Once again, however, this does not truly separate Law’s thought from that of other Nonjurors. Brett stated plainly why he rested his case on the authority of the early church.

I fix upon this period, not only because all the Learned allow it to have been the purest and most uncorrupt Age of the Church, but also because the *Charismata*, or miraculous Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit were so long undoubtedly continued in the Church.²⁰

Other Usagers were more cautious. To the Nonusager, Bishop Nathaniel Spinckes, who complained that the Usagers regarded the Fathers as “infallibly inspired” and their works as of “equal Authority with the Holy Scripture,”²¹ Bishop Jeremy Collier replied that the writings of the Fathers constituted merely sound historical evidence of primitive Christian practice, as the Doomsday Book constituted evidence in the study of medieval England.²² On the other hand, another Usager bishop, Archibald Campbell, maintained that illumination by the Holy Spirit and, consequently, infallibility belonged to all the virtuous faithful down to the modern age: “for Christ did not promise to be with His *Church* only for three or four hundred years, but *Always even to the End*.”²³ Happily, the virtuous faithful were defined so as to exclude all but Nonjurors.

The hesitant probing of the theme of spiritual illumination by the Nonjurors joins other equally cautious probings by them and other High Churchmen, directed to the same end: the discovery of adequate sources of authority to preserve orthodox positions from the corrosive effects of the English Enlightenment’s insistence on the individual’s reason—or at least the reasonings of the fashionable critics of orthodoxy—as the sole guide to the interpretation of scripture. It was precisely because they would not “acquiesce in Scripture and Reason as our *only*

¹⁹Ibid., 275.

²⁰Brett, *Tradition Necessary*, 58.

²¹[Nathaniel Spinckes], *No Sufficient Reason for Restoring the Prayers and Directions of King Edward the Sixth’s First Liturgy* (2 vols.; London: Morphew and Bettenham, 1718) 1. 103–4.

²²[Jeremy Collier], *A Vindication of “Reasons” and “Defence,” etc.* (2 vols.; London: Bettenham, 1718–19) 1. 35–37.

²³Archibald Campbell, *Doctrines of the Middle State between Death and the Resurrection* (London: Tayler, 1721) 243.

rule"²⁴ that the Usagers turned to tradition and attempted to link it to a notion of the illumination of the Fathers. For the same reason, Charles Leslie, the best of the Nonjuror theologians, struggled to oppose the right of private judgment, without yielding too much to the Roman Catholic case.²⁵ One can easily perceive these contributions as part of that epistemological conflict between the upholders of the authority of faith and the upholders of the authority of reason, which has conventionally been seen to lie at the heart of the matter of the Enlightenment. When one understands (as does Justin Champion, for example) that this debate possessed an important social dimension, in that it concerned the institutional location of authority,²⁶ it becomes impossible to exclude any piece of High Church polemic or any part of William Law's writings from the history of the English Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment.

The point is clear enough with regard to the pre-Behmenist Law. He did, after all, first take up his pen and enter the lists against Hoadly because he had "declared against the authority of the Church."²⁷ However, in *Demonstration of the . . . Errors of a Late Book*, which marks the end of his pre-Behmenist period, Law is again in conflict with Hoadly. This time he attacks the kind of rationalist biblical exegesis upon which the assaults on orthodoxy rested. Yet it seems clear that it was reflection on matters such as these that led Law to embrace Behmenism. It is highly significant that the work that initially led him to the study of Behmenism, Pierre Poiret's edition of *Fides et Ratio*, has as its chief discourse a refutation of Locke's epistemology.²⁸ Law's Behmenism is a historical accident occasioned by a curious response to this work; but it is also an understandable development of the earlier Law—and is, therefore, to be seen as a contribution to Counter-Enlightenment polemics. It is precisely this purposeful direction of Behmenism that is the chief justification for attributing originality to the Behmenist Law.

Although the point requires emphasis and illustration, the inclusion of Law's Behmenist works under the rubric "Counter-Enlightenment" is probably unexceptionable. In the first place, one can point out that Böhme has been identified as a prominent representative of a tradition of mysticism that was deeply concerned to assert, not merely religious but also confessional authority, and was indeed shaped by the challenges to that authority.²⁹ The probable nature of the influence of this

²⁴Thomas Brett, *A Farther Proof of the Necessity of Tradition, to Explain and Interpret the Holy Scriptures* (London: Bettenham, 1720) xix (emphasis mine).

²⁵Charles Leslie, *The Theological Works of the Reverend Mr. Charles Leslie* (2 vols.; London: Bowyer, 1721) 1. 175–89 and 193, esp. 187.

²⁶Justin A. I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and Its Enemies 1660–1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 10.

²⁷William Law, *Three Letters to the Bishop of Bangor* (London: Innys, 1753) 3.

²⁸Stephen Hobhouse, "Fides et Ratio: The Book Which Introduced Jacob Boehme to William Law," *JTS* 37 (1936) 350–68.

²⁹Weeks, *German Mysticism*, esp. 10–13.

Böhme on an eighteenth-century High Churchman is easily surmised. Furthermore, as A. K. Walker has suggested, it was Behmenism's potential as a weapon against what appeared to be the most dangerous of the Enlightenment's threats, deism, that was foremost among Law's reasons for embracing it.³⁰ Any examination of Law's Behmenist works appears to bear this out.

Law's use of Behmenism as an antideist and, incidentally, anti-Arian system of thought has no appearance of being incidental. It is not occasional but constant, and it governs not merely the content and structure of individual Behmenist works, but Law's Behmenist literary corpus as a whole. One can divide this into an earlier and a later part. Between the publication of the *Appeal to All That Doubt . . . the Truths of the Gospel* in 1740 and that of the first part of the *Spirit of Prayer* in 1749, Law wrote nothing. Instead, he engaged in a deepening of his understanding of Böhme. Clearly, over these nine years he came to the conclusion that his original exposition of the master's thought had been unsatisfactory. He did not, however, change the mode of exposition. In each period he produced a short work containing the core of what he wished to teach, followed by a fuller treatment. In the earlier period, his *Christian Regeneration* preceded the *Appeal to All That Doubt*, while in the later period the concise first part of the *Spirit of Prayer* preceded the dialogues of the second part and of the *Way to Divine Knowledge*. The *Spirit of Love* is similarly divided. Certainly Law had some hope when he wrote the first of these books, as he indicated in its subtitle and in its preface, that it would make an effective appeal to deists.³¹ He remained pleased with the book as a good statement of what he wished to teach³² but came to understand that it could hardly serve as an approach to those beyond the bounds of orthodoxy. They required an exposition that responded to their own thinking, which emerged as *Appeal to All That Doubt*.

When Law wrote the second part of *Spirit of Prayer*, he indicated the audience for whom he intended each part. The simple Rusticus, the character representing Law's ideal Christian, declares himself wholly uninterested in having this second part read to him, since he has already received adequate instruction from the first part and the teaching that he had, on hearing it, received from God.³³ There are three other characters. Theophilus simply represents Law himself. Academicus, who, since he is not as simple as Rusticus, is in need of obtaining further instruction and clarification. Even though he is a willing listener and sometimes an ex-

³⁰Walker, *William Law*, 108–9.

³¹William Law, *The Grounds and Reasons of Christian Regeneration, or, the New-Birth: Offered to the Consideration of Christians and Deists* (2d. ed.; London: Bradford, 1742).

³²Overton, *William Law*, 291–92.

³³Sidney Spencer, ed., *The Spirit of Prayer and the Spirit of Love by William Law* (Cambridge: 1969) 67–68.

pounder of Law's views, at times he displays the intellectual errors of the age and thus allows truth to correct them. Humanus, the deist, cannot fulfill this function, since Law does not allow him to speak before his conversion, which takes place before the dialogue of *The Way to Divine Knowledge* begins. His silent presence in the *Spirit of Prayer* is nevertheless essential, since it is chiefly to him that the arguments, which "must needs open in him a new way of thinking about Religion, and show him the deep and solid Ground of the absolute Necessity of the Christian Redemption,"³⁴ are addressed.

■ Behmenism and Antideism

From the assertion that Behmenism was able to serve as a source of Counter-Enlightenment reflection and that it did so for Law, one might go on to inquire why it, rather than any other body of ideas, did so. An answer to this will encompass an understanding of how it did so, although I can give no more than an illustration of this here. Briefly, one may say that Law found in Behmenism a credible reassertion of positions that the proponents of the Enlightenment would have denounced as long exploded, since they confuted some of their most fundamental beliefs. It was the radicalism of Behmenism's rejection of the nascent modern world that rendered the system appealing to Law. If this is so, he, a challenger of modernity, rises somewhat above the level of a significant figure in eighteenth-century religious history.³⁵ One may well object that what he embraced was Behmenism, rather than the Renaissance—and earlier—philosophical views it contained: his radical Counter-Enlightenment stances were accidental. This is, in a measure, true; but it is noteworthy, first of all, that Law was by no means a mere expounder of a system that he received. He exercised considerable selectivity in adopting Böhme's positions—and uniformly with the fundamental Counter-Enlightenment objective of defending Christian orthodoxy.³⁶

Further indication of Law's intentions emerges from restoring a unity to his thought. His biographers have reflected a belief in a radical discontinuity between his pre-Behmenist and Behmenist periods by marking the transition with some personal crisis or at least some inner distress. Walker supposes, with little evidence, a crisis of faith, occasioned by the encounter with deism. Overton expresses the matter with perhaps more truth, but still somewhat misleadingly, by saying that Law was now "painfully impressed with the weariness and unprofitability of reli-

³⁴Ibid., 82.

³⁵Robert Pattison sees John Henry Newman's true historical significance to lie in the profundity of his reactionary criticism of modernity. See his *The Great Dissent: John Henry Newman and the Liberal Heresy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

³⁶Arthur L. Wormhoudt, "William Law and Jacob Boehme" (Ph.D. thesis, State University of Iowa, 1948) 75–102.

gious disputings” and was inclining instead to “practical piety.”³⁷ This unhappily suggests intellectual escapism and tends to place Law among the devotees of that well-known phenomenon, the religion of the heart. The passage quoted by both biographers from the *Way to Divine Knowledge*, declaring “the debate [with the opponents of Christianity] was equally vain on both sides,” does not indicate that Law was turning away from the debate but merely that he was discontented with how its participants had hitherto conducted it and believed that he had found a way to end the impasse by effectively answering the errors of the day from the teachings of Böhme. Certainly, this was an event of great importance for Law. The most obvious mode of combating the Enlightenment’s intellectual and institutional assault on ecclesiastical authority lay in the development of the ideas of Catholic Christianity with which he was already acquainted. I say obvious, by virtue of the numerous claims of the protagonists of the Enlightenment to be zealous anti-Catholics, continuing the work of the Reformation. Instead, Law armed himself with the results of Böhme’s illumination. The choice of new weapons was, however, by no means an abandonment of the fight. Law’s character as a polemicist underwent modification by his adoption of Behmenism only to the extent that his polemic now took on something of a didactic appearance, as he constantly reverted to the chief elements of the system that he wished to teach.³⁸ Although the experience of deep acquaintance with Behmenism undoubtedly modified his polemical objectives, continuity of purpose, which the rest of this article seeks to illustrate, remained clear.

Hobhouse is accurate in his identification of the chief concern of the early Law: the crucial issue was sacerdotal authority.³⁹ Perhaps more commonly in the period, this was discussed in converse form, with reference to the right of private judgment. This, since those whom Law opposed held the act of faith to be an intellectual rather than a moral one, and since the intellectual questions were complex, was reduced to the question of sincerity. When Law launched into an attack on Bishop Hoadly for teaching that “it is *Sincerity*, as *such*, that procures the Favour of God,” the matter was already well worked. It had long been at the heart of the controversy over religious toleration, in which the proponents of that policy had inveighed against coercion as productive only of hypocrisy.⁴⁰ Law gave Hoadly the well-tried High Church answers, speaking of the need for objective truth to accompany sincerity and pointing to the moral character of the act of faith.⁴¹

³⁷Overton, *William Law*, 314–18.

³⁸There is no doubt that Hopkinson is making reference to this when he speaks of the later Law’s “dogmatism.” See Hopkinson, *About William Law*, 14.

³⁹Hobhouse, *Law and Quakerism*, 257.

⁴⁰Mark Goldie, “The Theory of Religious Intolerance in Restoration England,” in Ole Peter Grell, Johnathan Israel and Nicholas Tyacke, eds., *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991) 331–68.

⁴¹Law, *Three Letters*, 4.

Yet even in his first letter to the bishop of Bangor, Law gave signs that he was thinking more deeply about the matter of sincerity than was the bishop. For, in a discussion concerning the necessity of excluding the Stuarts from the throne on account of their Catholicism, Law made much of the failure of all Christians to act on their credal declarations.⁴² Although this may have the appearance of a commonplace, it was hardly so at the time. It would more commonly have been asserted “that belief, freely chosen and willfully pursued, was the source of all human action.” The assumption does much to explain the primacy of dogmatic concerns in the discourse of the period.⁴³ This conviction remained, despite the increasing prevalence of “interest” in the eighteenth century’s vocabulary, common enough to serve anti-Catholic polemic in the early nineteenth century.⁴⁴ Law, the opponent of Mandeville and his Hobbesian psychological egoism, was hardly a defender of the “cool self-love” of the eighteenth-century moralists. The same kind of observation of human behavior that they made led him to his most famous work, explaining the need for and method of that “devotion which is to govern the . . . actions of our life” and which he “found in almost every verse of scripture.”⁴⁵

By the time he came to write the *Way to Divine Knowledge*, Law, aided by Böhme, was able to offer his definitive answer, one unavailable to him when he offered his less than satisfactory reply to Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees* in 1723, to the “doctrine of the egoistic character of all motives whose objects are pleasure—the only good.”⁴⁶ He answered the difficulty by pointing to the distinctive nature of the moral actions of the regenerate Christian, whose goodness “comes forth as a *Birth of Life*, and is the free natural Work and Fruit of *that* which lives within us.” This is an “angelic Goodness . . . the Goodness of our first Creation . . . the Goodness of our Redemption.” The reasonings of Mandeville and others less provocative no doubt dealt adequately with that with which they were intended to deal. The kind of virtue of which they spoke, however, was “only according to the State of this earthly life” and such a virtue was but

a Virtue of Art, and human Contrivance, a Fiction of Behaviour, modelled according to Rule and Custom, or Education, that can go no deeper, nor rise higher, nor reach farther, than the Sense and Reason, and the Interests of Flesh and Blood, can carry it.⁴⁷

⁴²Ibid., 17–19.

⁴³Pattison (*Great Dissent*, 118) conceives the notion to be fundamental to Newman’s rejection of distinctively modern patterns of thought. See note 35 above.

⁴⁴Cadoc Douglas Auld Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant Kingdom: A Study of the Irish Ancien Régime* (London: MacMillan, 1994) 95.

⁴⁵Stanwood, *William Law: Serious Call*, 51.

⁴⁶Wormhoudt, “William Law and Jacob Boehme,” 22.

⁴⁷William Law, *The Way to Divine Knowledge: Being Several Dialogues between Humanus, Academicus, Rusticus, and Theophilus. As Preparatory to a New Edition of the Works of Jacob Behmen; and the Right Use of Them* (London: Innys and Richardson, 1752) 18–27.

In brief, the reasonings of contemporary moral philosophers could be dismissed as inadequate, since they failed to take account of the redemption: redemption as a dogma, certainly, though the emphasis was firmly on experienced, lived dogma.

Here indeed was a good deal more than a rejection of the Enlightenment's rationalism. Here, rather, was a return to the medieval tradition of denial of substantial value to philosophical speculation carried on independently of revelation. Law was expounding a Behmenist epistemology that distinguished between the uncertain *Vernunft* and the certain *Verstand*. Historically, the concept of *Verstand* derived chiefly from the Paracelsian concept of *scientia*, a knowledge obtained from *experientia* by illumination, although similar concepts existed among other thinkers of the German Renaissance. Functionally, however, there is great divergence between Law's Behmenist epistemology and its sources. Paracelsus's *scientia* gave an underpinning to a form of Renaissance magic.⁴⁸ Law, as an antagonist of the English Enlightenment, simply found useful a distinction akin to the scholastic one between mere *veritas* and *sincera veritas*, acquired by means of a *lux divina*.⁴⁹ Again, in view of the connection with ascetic theology, exemplifying reference might better be made to medieval Greek thought, which insisted on the absurdity of disregarding the consequences of sacramental and sacramentally generated experience in matters of epistemology.⁵⁰

The mode of thinking evident in treatment of the foundation of morality also resolved the question of sincerity. Insincerity was a necessary associate of the experience of reprobation, and from reprobation sprang only the uncertain *Vernunft*, which is wholly incapable of judging religious truth and inevitably produces error. In Behmenism, the experience of reprobation is the consequence of a failure to sacrifice egoism and selfishness to the life of love, which is hardly capable of being denominated as a sincere act.⁵¹ If the religion one embraces is such as "suits with the Interest of Flesh and Blood, and keeps the Soul happy in the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life," then it is, irrespective of the name one gives to it, a form of infidelity. At the intellectual level, it is grossly

⁴⁸Brian P. Copenhaver, "Astrology and Magic," in Charles B. Schmitt et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 264–300.

⁴⁹John Marenbon, *Later Medieval Philosophy (1150–1350)* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1991) 146–47.

⁵⁰Aristeides Papadakis and John Meyendorff, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy: The Church 1071–1453 A. D.* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Press, 1994) 293–306. For fuller treatment, see Jean Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Paris: Seuil, 1959).

⁵¹Hans L. Martensen, *Jacob Boehme . . . : Studies in his Life and Teaching* (2d. ed.; London: Rockliff, 1949) 131–33.

inadequate: it produces only works that are “dead,” communicating a knowledge of religion that bears the same relationship to true knowledge of religion as anatomy does to medicine. Worse, it is productive of confusion, since it draws the proponents of truth to argue on its own erroneous grounds.⁵² If, insincerity necessarily and uniformly produces false religion, sincerity is equally capable only of producing true religion. The honest recognition of one’s fallen condition produces the intense experience of desire for God. The converted deist of the *Way to Divine Knowledge*, Humanus, declares his experience of a want “which I never felt before, something much deeper than my Reason, and over which I have no Power; it glows in my Soul, like a Fire, or Hunger, which nothing can satisfy.”⁵³ From this comes the further experience of repentance and regeneration and, since these are trinitarian experiences, they necessarily issue in trinitarian orthodoxy. In his early Behmenist statement, the *Appeal to All That Doubt*, the emphasis is cosmological rather than personal (an insignificant difference for a Behmenist, who insisted on the unity of divine, human, and subhuman life), and the experience of the new believer is of the exterior world, as much as of interior movements. Yet the lesson taught is constant:

First, That Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one Being, one Life, one God. *Secondly*, That the Soul, which is dead to the Paradisical Life, must be made alive again by the Birth of the Son and the Holy Spirit of God in it, in the same Manner as a *dead Seed* is, and can only be brought to Life in this World, by the Light and Spirit of this World.⁵⁴

The lesson is also incapable of being misunderstood or disputed. The believer, in becoming such, has seen “with the Clearness of a Noon-Day Sun” and come to know that neither Arian nor deist “Opinion has any Thing left to stand upon”: he has acquired the certainty of *Verstand*.

■ Language and Orthodoxy

However historians may wish, retrospectively, to characterize the earlier English Enlightenment, in the eyes of contemporaries its most salient characteristic was undoubtedly its assault on Christian orthodoxy. The essentially religious debate of the English Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment, as it played itself out through every field of inquiry, was driven by a fear of a drift “towards deism, and even towards atheism.”⁵⁵ The concessions that some defenders made to En-

⁵²Law, *Way to Divine Knowledge*, 12–14, 24 and 28.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁴Law, *Appeal to All That Doubt*, 66.

⁵⁵John Redwood, *Reason, Ridicule and Religion: The Age of Enlightenment in England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976) 9–13, esp. 11.

lightenment criticism of Christianity was always too much for others. Thus a spectrum emerged. The crucial point on it was Arianism, which rejected any dogmatic guide to the interpretation of Scripture and left it a prey to contemporary rationalism's analysis.⁵⁶ For the Arians themselves and the even more heterodox beyond them, their positions rested on the *sola scriptura* doctrine and an appeal to the individual's reason. The most notable battles of the Enlightenment were, therefore, about the Bible. The text itself might be fought over with dogmatic purposes in view. The Usagers, with their reassertion of the role of tradition, chose a far more radical stance of a relative reduction of scriptural authority. Law avoided both of these obvious approaches, perceiving that the positions of the heterodox rested not merely on scripture and reason, but on a particular mode of interpreting the scripture. The question was conducted as one of language. Richard Kroll has argued that the early English Enlightenment consciously adopted a theory of language related to opinions about epistemological limitation put forward by Lockean philosophy. What was sought was a language congruent with the belief that "knowledge is ever only nominal, that is, operates with recourse to appearances, to what can be externally, publicly represented."⁵⁷ In his renewal in 1737 of conflict with his old adversary, Bishop Hoadly, Law took as his target this rejection of any language that made claims to represent a knowledge that was not universally accessible.

The work with which Hoadly had provoked Law treated the eucharist. However, in the *Demonstration of the . . . Errors of a Late Book . . .*, Law's assault was not on the bishop's conclusions regarding this topic, but on "the Foundation of his whole Discourse." This Law perceived to be the practice of interpreting scriptural passages "according to the common Rules of speaking in like cases." Thus had Hoadly dealt with the words of institution to reduce it to the barest of commemorations. Law protested: "But, pray Sir, where must a Man look for a *like Case*? Does the World afford us any Case like it? Have the *Speaker*, or the *Things* spoken of, any Things in common Life that are alike to either of them?"⁵⁸

⁵⁶J. Hay Colligan's work (*The Arian Movement in England* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1913]) is of value only to furnish the names of important authors and their tracts. A brief account of the content of the Arian controversy of the period can be found in Robert T. Holtby, *Daniel Waterland 1683–1740: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Orthodoxy* (Carlisle: Thurnam, 1966) 12–49. For the significance of the debate see Johnathan C. D. Clark, *English Society 1688–1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 277–348.

⁵⁷Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcraft, and Perez Zagorin, eds., *Philosophy, Science and Religion in England 1640–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 19–20.

⁵⁸William Law, *A Demonstration of the Gross and Fundamental Errors of a Late Book, Called 'A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,' etc.* (London: Innys, 1737) 4–5 (emphasis mine).

Clearly, what Law sought was an analogical method of scriptural interpretation. This interest in analogy was not immoderate. At this point, he showed no inclination to move beyond treating analogy as a device restricted, as an aid to insight, to the noetic realm. He did not yet, as the occult philosophers of the Renaissance did, regard the correspondences as disclosures of the nature of extramental reality.

As a reply to Hoadly's exposition of eucharistic doctrine, the *Demonstration* was at least adequate. Hoadly had in fact reduced the words of institution to proof texts of his eucharistic doctrine. Law's view that, if they were placed in the context of scriptural teaching as a whole, a more profound, analogical interpretation of them was required, appeared more convincing.⁵⁹ Law also scored against Hoadly by arguing that the latter's apparently plain and straightforward approach to scripture was in fact regulated by crypto-Arianism: he was incapable of interpreting individual passages in the light of Christian teaching as a whole, since he did not believe in that teaching.⁶⁰ In brief, although the *Demonstration* certainly contains some decidedly Behmenist turns of phrase, Law was able to deal effectively with the application of the Enlightenment theory of language in the biblical and dogmatic areas—which alone concerned him—substantially without Böhme's aid. Law was nevertheless drawn further into Behmenism and thus into a system, that was certainly subversive of latitudinarian and fashionable heterodox divinity, but also disparaging of all those intellectual movements that are marked as the path from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment. For this system was the epitome of the thought in reaction to which those movements came into existence.

For Locke and his contemporaries, as indeed for Bacon before him,⁶¹ the Renaissance's systems of analogical thought were fundamentally intolerable, chiefly in that their analogies appeared arbitrary. The analogical thinker's power to convince rested not on rational argument, but on the ability to present a compelling image. Another thinker, offering a contradictory image, might do the same. Analogy was a private language. The process allowed no external control by which to make a choice of images. Furthermore, if analogy was stretched from statements of comparison to become statements about the identity of things beyond the mind, then reality became subject to the vagaries of the individual human mind and incapable of being investigated.⁶² In brief, by becoming an apologist for Behmenism,

⁵⁹Ibid., 8–11.

⁶⁰Ibid., 44.

⁶¹Charles Whitney, *Francis Bacon and Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) 70–75.

⁶²Brian Vickers, "Analogy versus Identity: The Rejection of Occult Symbolism, 1580–1680," in Brian Vickers, ed., *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 95–163.

of which this last was the most marked feature, Law was rejecting the basis of the empiricism that not only sustained the changes occurring in the physical sciences but in virtually all other fields of intellectual activity too.

That Law adopted an analogical system of thought is not remarkable. David Nicholls points out and extensively illustrates the prevalence of analogical patterns of thought among diverse thinkers of the eighteenth century.⁶³ One should, however, distinguish the merely periodic inclination to think in analogical terms from the sustained use of analogical thought in the creation of Christian apologiae directed against deism and trinitarian heresy. This, too, was characteristic of the period. The apologetic of Joseph Butler, the bishop of Bristol and of Durham, is probably no longer to be given the credit for the eclipse of deism: decline had set in before the publication of the famous *Analogy of Religion* in 1736.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, its status as one of the most important English religious texts of the eighteenth century (retaining its influence well into the nineteenth century) is beyond question. The system propounded by the natural philosopher John Hutchinson in twelve volumes between 1727 and 1732 is far less known than Butler's work. It achieved, however, a real degree of popularity among High Churchmen, particularly in Oxford, around the middle of the century.⁶⁵ Indeed, this endured into the early decades of the nineteenth century, substantially influencing, for example, the thought of William Van Mildert.⁶⁶ It appears to have made a particular appeal to Anglicans in hostile environments, in Scotland and America,⁶⁷ but was also not without attraction to Presbyterians.⁶⁸

⁶³David Nicholls, *God and Government in an "Age of Reason"* (London: Routledge, 1995).

⁶⁴David Brown, "Butler and Deism," in Christopher Cunliffe, ed., *Joseph Butler's Moral and Religious Thought: Tercentenary Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 7–28.

⁶⁵Peter Benedict Nockles (*The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship 1760–1857* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994] 13–14) gives a useful listing of the important Hutchinsonians. For an understanding of their system see, in addition to those mentioned below, the following articles: G. N. Cantor, "Revelation and the Cyclical Cosmos of John Hutchinson," in L. J. Jordanova and Roy S. Porter, eds., *Images of the Earth: Essays in the History of the Environmental Sciences* (Chalfont St. Giles: British Society for the History of Science, 1979) 3–22; A. J. Kuhn, "Glory or Gravity: Hutchinson vs. Newton," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 22 (1961) 303–22.

⁶⁶William Van Mildert, *An Historical View of the Rise and Progress of Infidelity: . . . in a series of sermons preached for the lecture founded by . . . Robert Boyle . . .* (4th ed.; 2 vols.; London: Rivington, 1831). For some comments on this, see Elizabeth A. Varley, *The Last of the Prince Bishops: William Van Mildert and the High Church Movement of the Early Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 39–45.

⁶⁷G. White, "Hutchinsonianism in Eighteenth-Century Scotland," *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 21 (1982) 157–69; Theodore Hornberger, "Samuel Johnson of Yale and King's College: A Note on the Relation of Science and Religion in Provincial America," *New England Quarterly* 8 (1935) 378–97; Peter N. Carroll, *The Other Samuel Johnson: A Psychohistory of Early New England* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1978) 199.

⁶⁸One of Hutchinsonianism's most readable expositors was Duncan Forbes of Culloden,

The divergences between these three analogical systems of apologetic—Butler’s thought, Hutchinsonianism, and Law’s Behmenism—are best grasped by considering the degree of certainty that they desired to communicate. For Butler, analogy provided a basis for retaining Christian belief while he attacked its opponents with skepticism. Newman was to acknowledge his gratitude to Butler on both counts.⁶⁹ The skepticism tended, however, to become pervasive. Hutchinsonianism constituted a complete rejection of Butler’s skepticism, which declared that “[t]he economy of the universe, the course of nature, almighty power exerted in the creation and government of the world, is out of our reach.”⁷⁰ These were precisely what Hutchinson, at least in the eyes of his disciples, had shown could be understood, and as analogies of the divine reality, from scriptural revelation. For in the desire to defend orthodox Christianity, not only did Hutchinson’s curious variation on gematria restore the scriptures as the immediate font of trinitarian truth, but it also turned them into the source of an anti-Newtonian cosmology that was an immense trinitarian analogy—“the core of Hutchinson’s system.”⁷¹

Law, in turn, was even more concerned than Hutchinson to produce certainty. While the latter, however, offered this by means of confirmatory evidence drawn from beyond the strictly religious, Law offered a stronger psychological conviction. The very quality of analogical argument that rendered it repellent to thinkers such as Locke—its tendency to offer images instead of precise definitions and syllogistic arguments—was precisely what rendered it suitable for this purpose of Law’s. He, as an apologist, would no doubt have agreed heartily with Newman’s dictum that no one ever died for a syllogism. Then again, the images offered by Behmenism possessed a most effective immediacy. The Hutchinsonian neophyte was likely to find himself immersed in the complexities of the Hebrew language before he reached toward the persuasive, if remote, images of the Hutchinsonian cosmos. The Behmenist, however, learned his lesson immediately through the observation of the everyday world, of “every *Plant and Fruit*.”⁷² Law by no means deprecated the ability of the scriptures to transcribe its message in that other book, the “one opened in our own Hearts.”⁷³ Böhme had taught Law that the scriptures had but “only this one Intent, to make Man know, resist, and abhor the Working of his fallen earthly Nature; and to turn the Faith, Hope, and longing Desire of his

the Lord President of the Court of Session. See *Some Thoughts concerning Religion, Natural and Revealed* (London: Woodfall, 1735). There were other enthusiasts in the Kirk.

⁶⁹Brown, “Butler and Deism,” 8.

⁷⁰Quoted in Terence Penelhum, *Butler* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) 93.

⁷¹C. B. Wilde, “Hutchinsonianism, Natural Philosophy and Religious Controversy in Eighteenth Century Britain,” *History of Science* 18 (1980) 1–24, esp. 4.

⁷²Law, *Appeal to All That Doubt*, 66.

⁷³Spencer, *Spirit of Prayer*, 68.

Heart to God.”⁷⁴ Although the scriptures did, however, teach with clarity the Behmenist message of Fall and Regeneration and thus orthodox trinitarian belief in its fullness, the Book of Nature, to which reference was often made, taught it equally fully. As the *Appeal to All That Doubt* put it:

Revealed Religion is nothing else but a Revelation of the *Mysteries* of Nature, for God cannot reveal, or require any thing by a spoken or written Word, but that which he reveals and requires by Nature; for Nature is the great *Book* of revelation.⁷⁵

It was indeed “the whole State and Frame of Nature, and of every Life in this World” to which this work constantly directed the attention of the deist or Arian reader in order to invite him or her to the point where he could be confidently called upon simply to “be so no longer.”⁷⁶ Yet, while Law may have regarded the Book of Nature as the most effective for apologetics, in the end, it mattered little which book gave access to the truth: each confirmed the others. The concern of the early Enlightenment critics of analogical thought regarding the impossibility of finding a means to control the creation of images could not be shared by one who accepted such a pluriform revelation.

The particularly extreme form of analogical thought which Behmenism, with its pressing of analogy from mental comparison to extramental identity, represented, is its most notable divergence from Hutchinsonianism. Once again, in considering this, one should note Law’s desire for apologetic effectiveness and the communication of certainty. In marked contrast to Behmenism, which had to struggle to free itself from accusations of pantheism, Hutchinsonianism certainly did not press analogy to the point of identity. Indeed, it was a fundamental objective of Hutchinson, reflected throughout his cosmology, to defend the transcendence of God against the possibility of drawing from the Newtonian system a belief in God as the soul of the world.⁷⁷ The “names” of the Hutchinsonian system—fire, light, and air—remained merely the physical instruments for the work of creation, absolutely distinct from the Creator. They thus possessed only a strictly analogical relationship to the triune deity. The assurance of the truth of trinitarian doctrine that they gave was thus a merely intellectual one. In contrast, Behmenism spoke clearly of identity. Law summarily dismissed the whole Augustinian tradition of concern with the vestiges of the Trinity in nature and man as being “Nothing to the Matter.”⁷⁸ The qualities possessed by purely spiritual beings, humankind, and nature were, he insisted, “*one* and the *same*” with the qualities

⁷⁴Law, *Way to Divine Knowledge*, 34.

⁷⁵Law, *Appeal to All That Doubt*, 68.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 63 and 65.

⁷⁷Wilde, “Hutchinsonianism,” 5 and 10.

⁷⁸Law, *Appeal to All That Doubt*, 63–64.

possessed by the deity and thus generated the same processes. Crucially, these might be recognized as the spiritual processes at work within the individual. Here was a system of analogy that called only initially for observation of nature. More important was the introspection which that provoked. Behmenism thus offered not the mere observation of correspondences in the external world, which might be disputed, but a perception that, internally, one participated immediately in the divine qualities and processes.⁷⁹ It would be superficial to suggest that Law's concern was with introspective experience, because this, in a manner reminiscent of Cartesianism, was less accessible to doubt. Such an observation, albeit reductionist, is perhaps worth making. He did not seek, however, to deal with doubt psychologically. Rather, he believed that it was only effectively combated by divine activity in the individual. It is true that this line of thought might have developed through traditional doctrines of grace and divine indwelling, without recourse to Böhme's singular system. It is, however, altogether in keeping with the extreme character of Law's reaction to the Enlightenment's peripheralization of God, which he was conscious ran the risks of pantheism, that he adopted this mode of expressing the belief that Christians were indeed *divinitatis consortes*.

■ Conclusion

This article has argued that the various characters that scholars have ascribed to William Law, which I noted at the beginning of my discussion, are all illuminated significantly by the description of him as a Counter-Enlightenment polemicist. The use of such a description restores to him the unity of his career and relates him to major intellectual currents of his time. The description is justified first of all with reference to Law's lifelong inclination toward repudiation of the Reformation's traditions and to manifest sympathy for Catholicism. Catholic positions were inevitably anti-Enlightenment positions.⁸⁰ This was especially true in England, inasmuch as there Protestantism had in large measure entered into an alliance with Enlightenment thought,⁸¹ and was further characterized by "a quite immoderate . . . opposition to Roman Catholicism" and a "vision of a better world [that] was profoundly Protestant."⁸² Had he not turned to Behmenism, Law might have dealt

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 30–33.

⁸⁰I am not, of course, disputing that Roman Catholic thinkers on the European mainland did attempt to assimilate Enlightenment thought. A good example appears in Thomas O'Connor, *An Irish Theologian in Enlightenment France: Luke Joseph Hooke 1714–96* (Blackrock, Ireland: Four Courts Press, 1995). It may well be disputed, however, whether such assimilation could ever have been successful. In any case, such efforts were largely confined to a period after Law's.

⁸¹John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of the Enlightenment: Science, Religion and Politics from the Restoration to the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁸²Martin Fitzpatrick, "Latitudinarianism at the Parting of the Ways: A Suggestion," in John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor, eds., *The Church of England c. 1689–1833*:

effectively with the various challenges offered to Christian orthodoxy by the English Enlightenment by drawing from the resources of Catholic thought. Accordingly, the point of the discovery of Böhme is then to be seen as important—the fork in Law’s path. The road he in fact took, however, was also a continuation of that which he had hitherto followed.

One may illustrate this point in a number of ways. In the first place, the very structure of Law’s Behmenist corpus underscores its function as polemic against Atrinitarian heterodoxy and deism, the chief vehicles of the English Enlightenment. One may, however, probe more deeply and observe the manner in which Behmenism provided solutions to precisely the questions that had concerned the earlier Law. Indeed, such an investigation provides further evidence of Law’s fundamentally polemical intention, as the above discussion of Behmenist analogical thought has argued. There is also at least a suggestion that Behmenism appealed to Law because it offered the most radical contradiction of fundamental Enlightenment convictions, for Behmenism was a paradigm of the very kind of thought against which the early Enlightenment defined itself. Although one may also wish to note Law’s recalling of his age of the Christian vocation of *theosis*, it is this questioning of or, rather, assault on such fundamentals, that most convincingly justifies continuing interest in Law.